

Name: _____
Date: _____

City-States in Italy

During the Middle Ages, much of Italy was controlled by the Holy Roman Empire. As the emperors and popes fought for control, both were weakened. Several Italian cities formed states that were independent of both the empire and the church. Venice and Florence were two centers of power and wealth that became the cradle of the Renaissance.

Venice was founded in the fifth century by people fleeing from Attila the Hun. They settled on a group of islands on the northeastern edge of the Italian peninsula. Shipbuilding was the primary industry in Venice. During the Crusades, Venetian ships provided transportation to the Holy Land. By the 13th century, Venice was the most prosperous city in Europe. The city became rich by collecting taxes on all merchandise brought into its harbor. Venice built huge warships that protected the valuable cargo of its merchant ships from pirate raids. With the vast wealth

from trade, many of the leading families of Venice vied with one another to build the finest palaces or support the work of the greatest artists.

Florence, the “city of flowers,” was located in the hill country of north-central Italy. It prospered because of the wool industry. Sheep were raised in the rock hill country of central Italy, and Florence was a center of wool processing. During most of the Renaissance, wealthy merchants dominated Florence.

The merchants competed with one another by building grand palaces for themselves. The merchants were patrons of the arts. Patron comes from the Latin word for father. They hired artists to fill their homes with beautiful paintings and sculptures. Patrons bought rare books and paid scholars to teach their children. The money and encouragement of patrons together with that of the church, made the masterpieces of Renaissance art possible.

Answer in Complete Sentences

*1. Why did shipbuilding become the primary industry in Venice?

*2. Venice became the most prosperous city in the world in the 13th century by collecting taxes on merchandise brought into its harbor. Why do you think Venice became the most attractive port city of the region?

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Fill in the Blanks

The Renaissance began in trading cities in the northern part of the Italian peninsula. Genoa, Venice, Pisa, and Florence were centers of power and wealth that became the centers of the Renaissance. Venice is a center of industry on the northern edge of the peninsula. The primary industry in Venice and Genoa during the Renaissance was silk. Florence and Pisa prospered because of the wool industry.

Wealthy merchants in the Italian cities became patrons of the arts. Patron comes from the Latin word for favor. Patrons hired artists to fill their homes with beautiful paintings and sculptures. They purchased rare books and paid salaries to them. The money and energy of the patrons, together with that of the cities, made the magnificent Renaissance art possible.

Answer in Complete Sentences

*3. Why do you think patrons commissioned artists?

*4. Who could be described as a patron in modern society?
